

Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa (IMCHA)

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Adolescents' sexual and reproductive health

Educating adolescents on sexual and reproductive health contributes to preventing unplanned pregnancies whilst attending to teens' pregnancies and related needs ensures better health for them and their infants.

The IMCHA research team entitled “Responding to the challenge of adolescent Perinatal Depression” in Nigeria conducted a [randomized hybrid trial of psychosocial intervention in primary maternal care](#).

The study explored the effectiveness as well as the utility in routine practice of an intervention package specifically designed for adolescent girls with perinatal depression. The findings suggest that improving parenting skills should be a component of effective interventions for perinatal depression among adolescent mothers.



In Mozambique, adolescent pregnancy rate is among the highest in the world. The IMCHA research team entitled “Alert Community to Prepared Hospital Care Continuum in Marrere, Mozambique” assessed the quality of services of the Adolescent and Youth Friendly Service (AYFS) program, a nationwide intervention to reduce teen pregnancies, at the Marrere Health Centre, Nampula, northern Mozambique. The findings of the [Quality assessment in primary health care](#) study indicated that health professionals in different facilities applied the program differently which led to deficiencies in communication and information given to users, and that there was a lack of open discussions within families about sexual and reproductive health and limited participation of men in family planning. Recommendations to strengthen the AYFS program include reinforcing health professional's training to consistently protect adolescents' and young people sexual health, an important strategy in primary health care to achieve universal health coverage.

Quality of care

Availability of health services doesn't necessarily translate into their use. Quality of care, including health workforce's skills and capabilities as well as access to health equipment, are among key factors that help improve quality and build demand by populations.

Nigeria is confronted with a high maternal mortality ratio, which is estimated at 512 deaths per 100,000 live births. A study conducted by the IMCHA team entitled “Increasing Women's Access to Skilled Pregnancy Care in Nigeria” sought to [assess the quality of antenatal and postnatal care in Primary Health Centres \(PHCs\)](#) in two rural Local Government Areas of Edo State in Southern Nigeria. Previous studies in the State have found that underutilization of PHCs for maternal health care is partly due to beliefs that the services provided are of poor quality. This study's results show that

The [Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa \(IMCHA\) Initiative](#) funds 28 implementation research projects and two Health Policy and Research Organisations in 11 Sub-Saharan African countries. This eight-year, \$36 million initiative — jointly funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Global Affairs Canada, and IDRC seeks to improve maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes by strengthening health systems, using primary healthcare as an entry point. Watch a short video to learn about [IMCHA's impact](#).



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treatments are not offered optimally during antenatal and postnatal care in rural PHCs in the intervention sites. The authors' recommendations include a call for concerted action by health providers and policymakers in the PHCs to develop policies and interventions to improve the quality of delivery of antenatal and postnatal services in the Edo State.

A research team in Malawi explored the [Barriers and enablers of implementing bubble Continuous Positive Airway Pressure \(CPAP\): Perspectives of health professionals in Malawi](#) to help shed light on factors that influence implementation of CPAC among healthcare providers. These include: inadequate healthcare provider training to use the device, rigid division of roles and responsibilities among providers, lack of effective communication among providers and between providers and newborn's caregivers, human resource constraints, and inadequate equipment and infrastructure. The study uncovered the interconnectedness of provider, caregiver and health system level factors that each and combined contribute to delays in bubble CPAC use. The study also highlighted potential areas where the implementation of the CPAP can be strengthened for more effective use.

Despite increasing facility-based deliveries and considerable strides in reducing child mortality, Malawi faces a high rate of neonatal deaths. To help shed light on this challenge, the above-mentioned team in Malawi [assessed the quality of newborn care at district facilities](#). Only one of the 12 domains examined, namely laboratory, met the standards of care with only minor improvements needed. The study results indicate a few areas requiring improvement: infection control; equipment, supplies and setup for newborn care in the labor ward, in the surgical theater, and nursery; as well as for sick newborns' management, monitoring and follow-up.

Filling the knowledge gap

Research evidence informs implementation of proven interventions to extend access to and use of health services for improved maternal and child health

The IMCHA implementation research project "The Alert Community to Prepared Hospital care continuum" aims to reduce maternal and newborn mortality rates in 2 districts in Northern Mozambique. The research team argues in the article [Implementation research methods: an extension tool in health education and information](#) that implementation research methods can be an efficient extension tool for population health education as well as health and educational professionals vocational training.